

REFERENCE SERIES: Transportation in Connecticut

ARTICLE NO. 11 FHWA Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Program

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This simple guide provides insight on the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Recreational Trails Program (RTP), which is administered by the State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP). This article focuses on available sources of information on the program for local project administrators and regional planning organizations (RPOs).

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Overview

The provisions of the federal transportation bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), went into effect on October 1, 2012, for federal fiscal years 2013 and 2014. This act replaces the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Recreational Trails Program (RTP) initiatives are now recognized under the MAP-21 Transportation Alternatives (TAs) apportionment via 23 U.S.C. 213. Details on the RTP structure are outlined in 23 U.S.C. 206. The RTP is administered by the State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) on behalf of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Program and Contact Information

The CT DEEP maintains an active web page (www.ct.gov/dep/rectrails) for information on the program. The web page contains valuable information, including typical process outlines, guidance materials, sample proposals, lists of previously funded projects, schedules for applying for funds as well as other helpful links. If you have any further questions please feel free to contact Laurie Giannotti at (860) 424-3578 or by email at laurie.giannotti@ct.gov.

Grantees and Permitted Uses

For RTP funds set-aside under the MAP-21 TAP, the eligible project sponsor provisions under 23 U.S.C. 206 are retained. The CT DEEP may award grants to private organizations; municipalities; federal, state and regional agencies and other government entities such as tribal. Sponsors may submit proposals for any of the permitted uses as listed:

- Construction of new trails (motorized and non-motorized).
- Maintenance and restoration of existing recreational trails (motorized and non-motorized).
- Access to trails by persons with disabilities.
- Purchase and lease of trail construction and maintenance equipment.
- Acquisition of land or easements for a trail, or for trail corridors.
- Operation of educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection as related to recreational trails.

Eligible and non-eligible project activities are defined in greater detail under the RTP guidance at the CT DEEP web page (www.ct.gov/dep/rectrails). Funding level targets and grant selection procedures are outlined in the guidance as well.

Multiple use projects are encouraged and receive additional points toward ranking. To be considered multiple use the project must accommodate two (2) or more of the following user groups: foot-travel (hiking, cross country skiing, roller blading, etc.), equestrian, cycling, mountain biking, or motorized uses.

Application Solicitations

Eligible Projects Proposals must be submitted so that the Recreational Trails Advisory Committee (RTAC) will be able to consider the whole project from beginning to end. Applicants may submit scope of work and budgets that target a phase or phases of the whole project. A "phase" should be a 'stand-alone' project that can be utilized successfully independent of the whole project. Refer to the CT DEEP program web page (www.ct.gov/dep/rectrails) for a schedule of solicitations for project applications.

Other Notes and Resources

The information in this article is provided as a first step in understanding the transportation planning, development, design and implementation process. Many topics focus on elements particularly relevant to locally administered transportation projects. The full detail of the process, particularly rules of eligibility, special provisions, requirements, or constraints is not within the purview of this reference document. It is imperative that municipal staff contact their RPO early in the process for guidance.

In addition to the CT DOT website at www.ct.gov/dot, the Local Project Administration website of the University of Connecticut's CTI-Technology Transfer Center provides many resources for municipal staff and managers of local projects: www.t2center.uconn.edu. Other articles in the Reference Series: Transportation in Connecticut are posted at the Department's website and can be located by navigating to Publications > Pamphlets.

Article No. 12, entitled "FHWA Transportation Alternatives Program", provides insight on the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), including legislative changes affecting the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program, and Transportation Enhancement (TE) Program initiatives.

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